



## **BHS wrestlers first in state to earn scholarships**

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**BENTONVILLE** - Seniors Caleb Bourland and Christian Schuler had a lot of firsts during their wrestling careers in high school.

Schuler was one of the first

members of the Bentonville team when it was still at club status four years ago and the seniors were part of Arkansas' first sanctioned state championship team this season.

They added another Thursday, becoming two of the state's first wrestlers to receive athletic scholarships. The Bentonville teammates will wrestle at Bacone College in Muskogee, Okla.

"It's a big step forward for wrestling in the state," Bentonville coach Bill Desler said. "They both did real well. They were both team captains and were both hard workers." Schuler was the state runner-up at 145 pounds last year as the Tigers won their second Arkansas Wrestling Association title, despite wrestling with an injured knee.

He built a 12-1 record early in his senior season but was not able to wrestle at the state tournament because of illness.

"Stuff happens but I'm glad I can continue," Schuler said.

"I've been doing it for four years and looking for any way possible to keep it up."

Schuler, who is practicing with his Bentonville teammates and will compete in this summer's freestyle tournament in Rogers, is excited about wrestling in college after watching the Warriors practice.

"I went to one practice and let me tell you, it was pretty hard," he said. "I think I'm going to enjoy it."

Desler said both wrestlers will do well in college.

"(Caleb) has been wrestling since he was probably six," Desler said. "Christian will probably make more improvements just because he's still new. I think that's what the coach sees in him - raw talent."

College coaches likely will see determination in Bourland, a two-time state runner-up in his two seasons with the Tigers.

Bourland moved to Arkansas from Indiana, where he had been a successful wrestler for

two years at Brown County High in Nashville. Bourland missed nearly half of his junior season with a neurological disorder that was identified and controlled after the state tournament. He built an impressive 44-4 record as a senior at 119 pounds.

"Looking back on it, it doesn't seem like it should have been possible," Bourland said. "I just took it one day at a time."

After a second-place finish at the Brute adidas Nationals in Kansas City, Mo., earlier this month, Bourland feels he's ready for college. He hopes a good freshman year at Bacone might help him transfer to Division I after that.

Bacone College became a four-year college in 2001 and is a member of the NAIA's Red River Conference. The Warriors have had several All-American wrestling selections and were ranked in the top 10 nationally to end the 2006 season.

Head coach Brett Oleson, an two-time national qualifier at Waldorf (Iowa) College, led the Warriors to No. 6 ranking in the Central Group in his first year at Bacone.

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